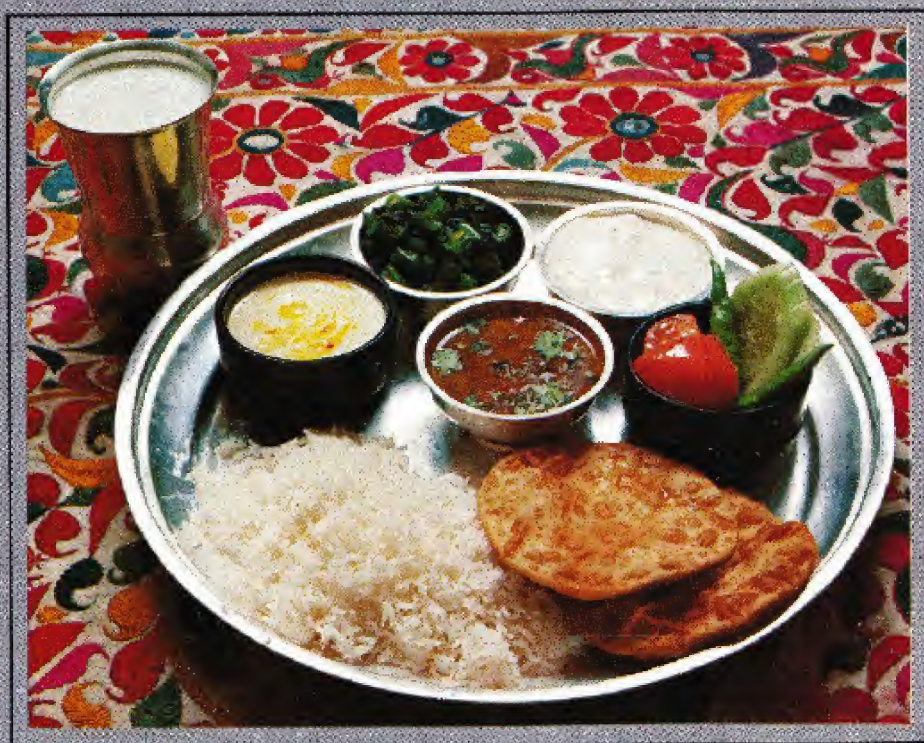


KNOW INDIA

Cuisine



Cuisine



Cover: Puri or hotel loaf is eaten after a meal, and is considered a good digestive. Above: A typical thali meal, served in a silver or stainless steel tray, with separate bowls for each vegetable and lentil dish.



Above: Steamed rice dumplings called idlis are typical of south India. They are generally eaten with a lentil dish called sambhar and a coconut chutney. On the right are bondas, made of potatoes and chick pea flour. Right: Dhokla is a steamed savoury cake made of lentils and yoghurt by people in the western states of Gujarat and Maharashtra.



Eating in India is a very special affair. The cuisine has evolved over 4000 years and the preparation of food is endowed with an ancient sanctity. What makes eating in India a gastronomic adventure however, is the sheer diversity of food. In the course of its chequered history, the country has absorbed many culinary influences. The result is that the traveller is likely to find as many styles of cooking and types of food as he would on a journey through Europe. Possibly the only items common to more than one region of the country, are rice, which is a staple of the south, west and east, and an occasional food in the north; yoghurt, eaten either directly or used as an ingredient or marinating agent, lentils and *papads*, the latter frequently referred to as poppadams in the west.

Nowhere is this diversity more noticeable than in the cooking medium that is used. *Ghee* or clarified butter is common all over the country, though it is now sparingly used either on grounds of health or economy. But based on what grows locally, mustard oil is used in northern and eastern India, groundnut oil in western India, sesame oil on the east coast and coconut oil on the west coast. Each of these imparts such a distinctive flavour to the food cooked in it that the discerning visitor will soon be able to place exactly from which part of the country a certain dish has emanated. Indeed, the greatest food adjustment that, say, a south Indian in eastern India has to make is the switch from sesame oil to mustard oil!

So great is the variety in the country that the traveller who has grown up on the notion that this is the land of curry and rice, is in for a surprise. Certainly curry does feature, almost as ubiquitously as it does in Indian restaurants scattered all over the world, but it is a far cry from what is produced in the west. Curry, to the Indian, is not the name of a dish.

Rather, it encompasses a whole class of dishes. There are any number of curries, made with meat, fish, fowl, vegetables or even on occasion fruit, and the only similarity between them is that they all contain freshly ground spices including turmeric, and have a 'gravy'. But the combination of spices, often handed down from mother to daughter, and kept a deep, dark secret, is what makes one curry totally different from another.

Spices, in fact, are the one unifying factor in Indian food, a common thread running through the entire fabric of Indian cooking. Spices, either whole or ground, are used everywhere, and it is through effecting various permutations and combinations that the Indian cook wields his culinary magic. The use of spices began with the idea of preserving food from the effects of the sweltering heat. But this reason has now faded into the mists of time. Today, the Indian cook, throwing in a pinch of this and a dash of that, is primarily concerned with making his culinary creation distinctive and delicious.

If the preparation of food is important, its presentation is no less so. Porcelain plates, Western style, are a modern innovation and to be eschewed by the orthodox because they are made with bone ash. Traditionally, an Indian meal is served either on a well washed banana leaf or on a *thali*. A *thali* is a large, usually round tray made of brass, bell metal, stainless steel or, in affluent homes, polished silver. On it reposes an array of *katoris*, small metal bowls to hold individual portions of each dish. A typical meal would consist of portions of chicken or meat, or perhaps fish, a couple of vegetable preparations, *dal* or lentils, yoghurt or *raita* which is yoghurt mixed with chopped salad vegetables and suitably garnished. Other accompaniments would be pickles and *papads*, both of which the traditional



Above: Kanji made of fermented carrots and mustard seeds, is a popular summer drink in north India. Above right: Crisp, spicy snacks called chaat are a favourite at roadside stalls. Right below: Syrup-sweetened jalebies are an enjoyable tea-time snack.

housewife makes each year, and perhaps a wedge of lime and a small mound of salt. All these will be arranged along the rim of the thali, while in the centre will be the cereal, either rice, or whole-wheat *puris*, or both. The rules of etiquette demand a certain pattern of arrangement, though no-one is overly rigid about this any more. Drinking water, usually in metal tumblers, is placed on the left of the thali and not the right. And the meal is eaten with the fingers of the right hand, which is an art in itself.

Perhaps surprisingly to visitors from abroad, there is no tradition of drinking alcohol with a meal. Travellers will find neither beer, wine nor an equivalent served with dinner in the typical Indian home. Food instead is washed down with water. Today in modern, Westernised homes, alcohol is served, but invariably before the meal.

There are, however, a whole host of non-alcoholic drinks that could be



termed aperitifs. A favourite winter drink in the northern state of Punjab is *kanji*, made of fermented carrots and mustard seed. In summer all over India mango juice, either made with ripe or raw mangoes is popular. *Zeera pani*, made with cumin seed and tamarind juice, is believed to be an excellent digestive. Fruit juices, spiced or plain, are made with the season's fruits. In coastal areas, there is also the mineral-packed milk of the tender coconut. But supreme amongst all Indian drinks must surely be the common or garden *nimbu pani*, served throughout the year and especially in summer, and made of the juice of limes and water.

Food from the north

The general idea that prevails is that north Indian food is largely non-vegetarian. Nothing could be further from the truth. A great proportion of the people in this area, and especially the women, are vegetarians. But this is



also the area where the Mughals made their greatest impact. The influence of their cuisine, coupled with several Muslim preparations that date back to the pre-Mughal era, has made the meat cookery of this region famous.

As a consequence, at least where non-vegetarian food is concerned, north India is the closest that one gets to curry country, with a great many of the curries being Mughal in origin. Cooked with cream and ghee, thickened with almonds and onions, and flavoured with fragrant spices, these gourmet dishes are definitely not for the figure conscious. But they are undeniably delicious. The variations on the curry theme include such well known dishes as *Rogan Josh* which is perhaps the most popular of them all, *Doh-Piaza*, made, as the name 'twice onion' suggests, with more than the usual quantity of onions, *Kormas* which are particularly rich, and *kofta* or meat ball curries.

There is evidence of Central Asian antecedents in the *keema* or minced meat preparations and in the *kababs* and *pulaos*, including *biryani* which is a concoction of rice, saffron and marinated lamb, in the cuisine of North India. But over the years, these have been completely Indianised. The kabab here, for instance, continues to be marinated meat grilled or boiled on skewers over charcoal embers. But the spicing is more marked and distinctive than in the original. Moreover there are any number of different kinds of kababs, such as *boti kababs*, *reshmi kababs*, *pasinda kababs*, *sheek kababs*, *kakori kababs* and *shammi kababs*, the last made of a spiced paste of ground meat and lentils, and not broiled but fried.

An array of kababs and wholewheat rotis or Indian breads, which are characteristic of the 'tandoori dishes' of north India.





The Tandoor

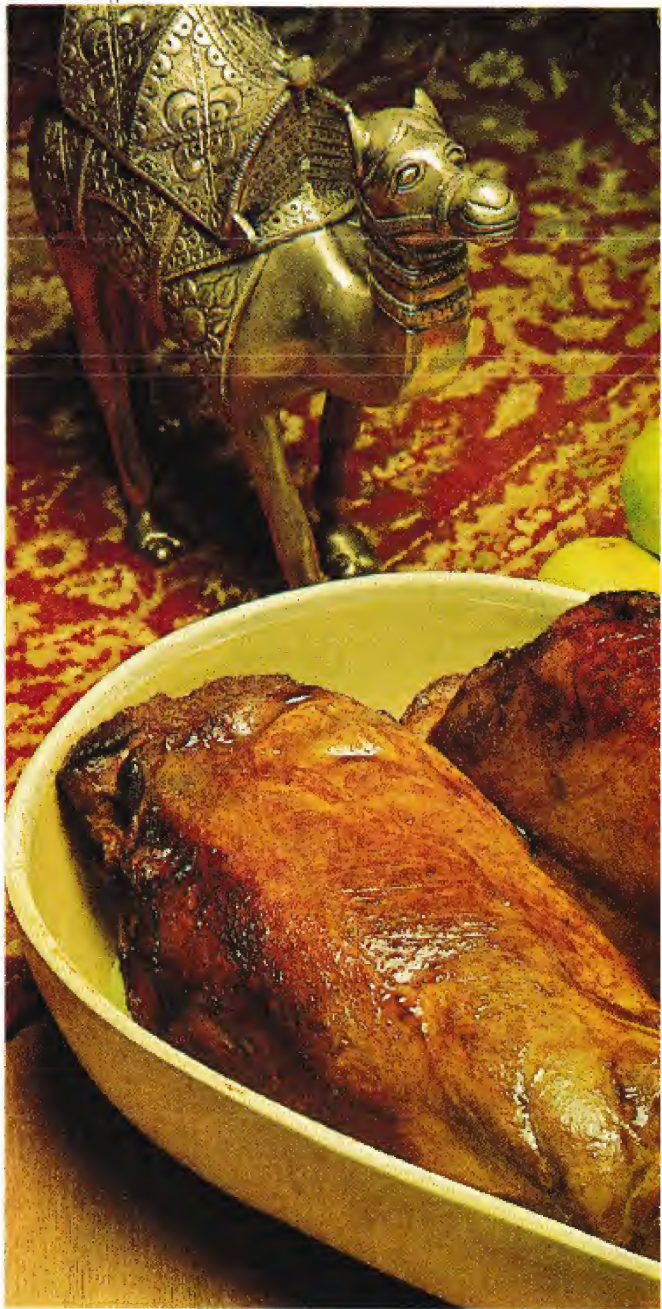
Hailing from the North West Frontier Province, now in Pakistan, is the tandoori type of food that today is as popular as curry. It gets its name from the *tandoor* which is the oven in which it is baked. But this is no ordinary oven. As old as civilisation itself, it consists of a five foot high clay receptacle which opens at the top and has a small lid.

Deep within the belly of the tandoor a wood or charcoal fire is lit. Once the fire is going well, the lid on the tandoor is closed so that the heat can build up. Patience is required at this stage, because the tandoor needs to get red hot before it can be used. Armed with years of experience, the tandoori cook knows exactly when to whip the lid off and get started. He rapidly pats lumps of unleavened dough into flat *rotis* and slaps them briskly onto the inside walls of the tandoor. Or perhaps he takes some leavened dough, fashions it into an elongated triangle and sprinkles it with poppy seed to make *naans*. Small chickens, marinated previously in yoghurt and spices, are strung within. Or the tandoor is loaded with ready skewered kababs. Or for vegetarians, spiced squares of *paneer* or cottage cheese. Or even pieces of fish, which is a modern addition to the typical North West Frontier fare.

With the lid back on, the cook can take a break. But not for long. Within minutes, he is back at work again, taking out succulent chickens cooked to a turn, mouth watering kababs, perfectly baked *rotis* and *naans* . . . with the addition of some makhani dal, a delectable lentil preparation, a bowl of *raita*, perhaps a salad, and you have a meal fit for a king.

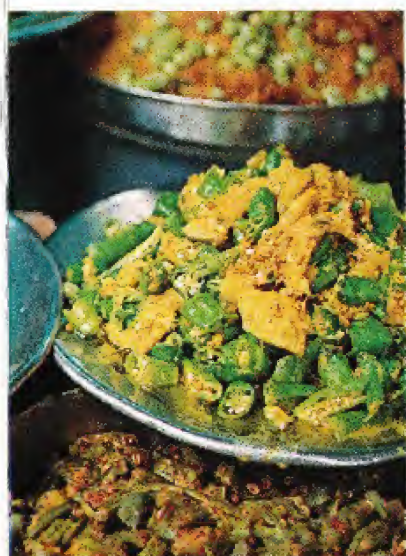
But though some of the country's best non-vegetarian food comes from the north, as has already been mentioned, equal, if not greater emphasis is placed on vegetarian food.

Hardev Singh



Above: Raani, tandoori leg of lamb is a north Indian speciality. Right: An array of pickles accompanies almost every meal.





In fact right through the country, vegetarian food is the backbone of the diet of the people. This is a country where protein is obtained from milk products and lentils and not from meat, so much so that these form a compulsory part of the Indian meal. In non-vegetarian households, a meat, fish or chicken dish will accompany a meal, but more as an addition to than a substitute for a vegetarian dish. The consequence is that nowhere in the country is a vegetarian at a disadvantage, and special arrangements seldom have to be made to accommodate such a guest.

With such an accent placed on vegetables, and the deep freeze culture still light years away, the seasons play an important part in dictating the menu. In the Punjab, for instance, in winter, one of the greatest delicacies is *sarson ka saag*, mustard greens cooked in a special way and eaten traditionally with *makkai ki roti* or rotis made with maize flour.

South India

But for true vegetarianism, south India is the place, especially where the Brahmin cuisine, very different to the non-Brahmin one, is concerned. The orthodox south Indian Brahmin is a strict vegetarian, steering away from garlic and onions, and even tomatoes and beetroot because they are the colour of blood. His diet in all the four states of this area is based on the bounty of the countryside. Tamarind grows here and so do chillies. Coconut is also freely available. And the dal that grows here is *arhar*, a yellow lentil. It is a combination of these four that, along with tamarind, spices and a vegetable makes *sambhar* which is a staple dish of the region and is eaten twice a day. *Rasam*, a thin, peppery, lentil-based soup is also compulsory eating at both lunch and dinner, and if old wives tales are to be believed, it is this that is



Avinash Pasricha

Right: Lime rice is quick and easy to make, and has the flavour of south Indian spices. Above: There are western style restaurants in major Indian cities. Facing page above: Rice-and-meat biryani is the result of Muslim influence on Indian cuisine.

Facing page below: Rice fields are a familiar sight in south India where this cereal is a staple food.



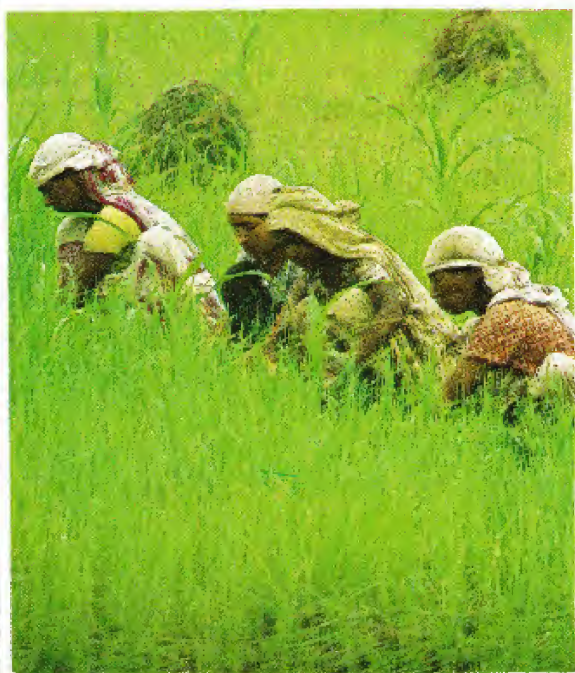
responsible for the alleged mathematical brains of the south! At any rate, rasam is the forbear of the now famous mulligatawny soup, the name itself a corruption of the Tamil *milagu tannir*, or pepper water. A typical meal in the south consists of sambhar, rasam, two or three vegetable preparations often cooked with grated coconut and yoghurt, eaten generally with boiled rice.

But without a doubt, the most popular dishes that come out of the south are *dosas* and *idlis*. Their popularity has spread through the country to such an extent that even in the Himalayan fastnesses of Lch and Darjeeling and neighbouring Bhutan, there are eating places where dosas and idlis are served. Both are made with a mixture of ground fermented rice and dal, and they are typically served with sambhar and a coconut chutney. But while dosas are griddle-fried pancakes, idlis are more like steamed dumplings.

Though there is a measure of similarity between the foods of the four states of south India, there is one pocket where the cuisine is different. This is Hyderabad which was once ruled by the Muslim Nizams. Typical Hyderabadi food has Muslim overtones and includes several dishes that are unique to this area, such as *baghara baigan*, a distinctive dish made with aubergines, and wheat and mutton *haleem*. Even the biryani in Hyderabad tastes different.

Eastwards to Bengal

If the business of eating is special to all Indians, to the Bengali it is the most important thing in his life! Bengal is where the man of the house considers it the first duty of the day to do the daily marketing. This is where the Bengali will travel from one end of the city to the other just to buy at a particular shop a sweetmeat that is, in his opinion, made better than



elsewhere. But alas, this is also where the traveller will find it difficult to obtain a Bengali meal unless he eats with a family. In the perhaps mistaken belief that Bengali food is a cultivated taste, restaurants avoid serving it.

First on the list of priorities for the Bengali is fish, and a great deal of time and thought is spent on obtaining this. Sea fish is *infra dig*, and if available at all, is disdainfully rejected. No self-respecting Bengali will eat anything but freshwater fish, but fortunately there is an abundance of this along with prawns, lobster and shrimp. With mustard growing profusely in this region, mustard seed and mustard oil are both used regularly, particularly with fish or prawns. A typical dish of this region, for instance, is *chingri malai*, a concoction of prawns, coconut and spices.

There are, of course, several different ways in which fish can be cooked such as *macher jhol*, a fish stew, or *macher jhal*, fish once again with mustard seed. The fish used for these dishes is usually carp or other similar varieties. However, what the traveller must not miss, (and happily they are available in hotels and restaurants in say, Calcutta) are Bekti and Hilsa. Bekti is good for the Continental style of cooking, and is especially delicious either fried or grilled. Hilsa, on the other hand, lends itself more to the Indian style of cooking, except for one outstanding dish which has been inherited from the days of the British Raj. This is Smoked Hilsa, and it is a creation that amply justifies the labour that goes into producing it. Not that the cooking itself is difficult—it merely has to be marinated for several hours and then smoked over live coals and puffed rice—but Hilsa is a fish with a million tiny bones each of which has to be painstakingly removed.

Chingri malai is a Bengali dish made of prawns and coconut.







T.S. Satyan

Vegetables are bought fresh each day by Indian housewives.

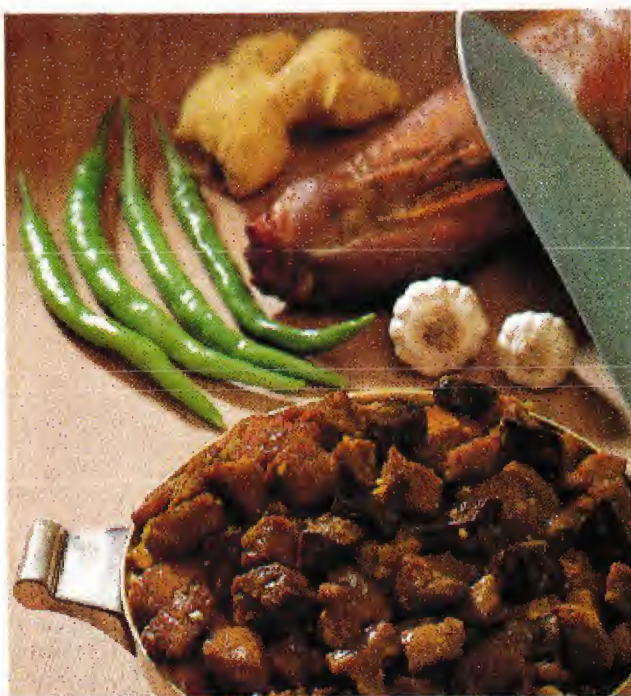


If the Bengali's first love is fish, then without a doubt, the second is sweets. Most of the really special and typical sweets that come from here such as *sandesh* and *rassagollas* are made in various ways from cottage cheese. One notable exception is *misti doi*. Bengali cuisine is unique in India insofar as it is the only one that does not include yoghurt in its bill of fare. But to compensate there is *misti doi*, literally meaning sweet yoghurt, and what a magnificent compensation this is! Traditionally, no sweets are made at home. They are always bought at a confectioner's and this goes for *misti doi* also. And just as well. The recipe seems to be a closely held secret which no housewife has yet successfully been able to penetrate.

Western India

To eat in western India, especially in the cosmopolitan city of Bombay, is to be presented with an enormous diversity of styles of cooking, perhaps more so than anywhere else. This is an area that has absorbed and assimilated a host of different influences. The Maharashtrians and Gujaratis, the original natives of the region have their quota of meat eaters but are predominantly vegetarian, and like the south Indian, have mastered the art of vegetarian cooking. Their cuisine involves subtle spicing and light cooking, with the use in Maharashtra of sprouted lentils, to produce palatable and nutritious meals. Sweet and sour dishes are greatly favoured. Unlike the south, however, both rice and wheat are eaten here.

The Parsis, on the other hand, who came centuries ago to this country from Iran, are heavily non-vegetarian, and believe in heavy spicing. Nevertheless, their cuisine is quite delicious and totally different. Most popular amongst their many dishes is perhaps *Dhansak*, a preparation they eat traditionally



Chicken Mughlai is a rich chicken preparation that is often eaten with a kind of bread called naan.
Top: Pork sorpatel from the coastal state of Goa.

every Sunday. This consists of chicken or lamb cooked with a generously spiced puree of a mixture of lentils and vegetables.

Belonging to Bombay also are two Muslim sects, the Boras and the Khojas. Each has its own style of cooking, as does another community called the Sindhis. But most distinctive of all perhaps is the cuisine of the Goans. Till some years ago Goa belonged to the Portuguese, and this influence is noticeable in the food of this region. One of their best known dishes is *vindaloo*, meat cooked with spices and vinegar, which took its name from the Portuguese *vinadalhos*. The Goans are great pork eaters, indeed pork and rice are their year round staples, though they also eat a great deal of seafood, and vindaloo is usually made of this meat. But equally good is *Sorpatel*, pork cubes also cooked with vinegar and spices. And Goa sausages with their distinctive taste, are different to any other sausages in the world.

Sweets

As in the West, no Indian meal is complete without a sweet or dessert. Apart from this, sweetmeats are eaten at tea time and on all festive occasions. Most of these are milk based, and found across the country, varying merely in detail. One such milk preparation is generally cooked with a cereal such as semolina, rice or sago, and garnished with nuts and raisins. This dish, a must for all auspicious occasions is called different names in different parts of the country — *kheer* in north India, *payasam* in south India, *payash* in east India and so on. In Maharashtra, there is another milk sweet that is famous in the country. This is *shrikhand*. Made of yoghurt from which all the liquid has been drained, it is sweetened and flavoured with saffron and cardamom, and sprinkled with chopped nuts. Other



milk sweets include those that come from Bengal, and *gulab jamun*, and *barfi*.

But milk based sweets are not all. There is a huge variety of sweetmeats such as *jalebies*, *laddus* and *halvas*. Karnataka in the south specialises in a sweet called Mysore pakh which is made from gram flour. Most travellers to India, however, find that the sweets are rather too sweet, but for the Indian palate, they are just right.

Paan

The meal has come to an end but there is one final item left. This is *paan*, betel leaf wrapped around a variety of ingredients and considered an essential digestive. The making of paan, especially in the north, is a ceremonial ritual. At the end of the meal, when everyone is replete and relaxed, the housewife will settle down with her *paan daan*. This is a small chest, often made of wrought silver or brass, which contains all the ingredients for the making of a paan. Apart from a supply of betel leaves, there are betel nuts with a traditional scissor-shaped cutter



T.S. Satyan



Above: A seller of sweets and savoury snacks in south India. Right: Salads are a new and popular addition to Indian cuisine.

to shred them, cardamoms and cloves, lime paste, catechu, scented tobacco (for those who want it) and various other bits and pieces. Sitting cross-legged, the housewife will take a leaf, carefully wipe it, and then smear it with lime paste and *katha* or catechu. Then she will put a little bit of *supari* or betel nut, some cardamom, perhaps a bit of one or more of the other spices on the leaf. Finally, the ritual is over and she will fold over the paan into a triangle, and pierce a clove through the folds to hold them together.

Needless to say there are almost as many types of paan as there are states. The quality of leaf differs from one area to another. Benarasi paan is particularly sought after, and the connoisseur will frequently refuse to have anything else. In south India, the *bida* is eaten. Very different from its north Indian sister, it is made into the shape of a pyramid and apart from *supari* also contains a bit of grated coconut.



Tandoori chicken can be made at home in an oven

Recipes

Many Indian recipes tend to be elaborate and time-consuming, using ingredients that are not always available in the West. However, there are some that are light to eat and can easily be made outside India. The following are a selection of such recipes and come from different areas in the country.

NORTH INDIA

With vegetarians relying heavily on milk products for their protein, frequent use is made, especially in the north (and east India for sweets) of cottage cheese or paneer. This can be bought but is more often made at home. Feta cheese is an adequate substitute, but its worth trying to make. All you need to do is boil a litre

of milk, and as it comes to the boil, squeeze the juice of half a lime, (or add a cup of yoghurt) into the milk. Stir the milk as it curdles and then remove it from the fire. Strain through a cheesecloth to extract the paneer. Squeeze out as much of the liquid as possible and then weigh it down in order to remove the remaining moisture and make it more compact. You should be able to cut the paneer into squares.

Palak Paneer

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. spinach
1/2 inch root ginger, finely minced
4 cloves garlic, finely minced
4 tablespoons oil
salt to taste
1 teaspoon chilli powder
1 lb. paneer
1 teaspoon garam masala powder

2 tablespoons tomato puree
2 medium sized onions, chopped

METHOD

Wash spinach, and boil it with ginger and garlic. Drain and puree. Heat oil in a pan and add onions. Fry until brown. Add tomato puree and spinach. Add chilli powder and coriander, and cook for ten minutes. Finally, add diced paneer and sprinkle with garam masala before serving.

Tandoori Chicken

Obviously making a tandoori chicken without the traditional tandoor is not ever going to be quite the same. But a very adequate substitute is the recipe we give below.

INGREDIENTS

A 2 lb. chicken
1 medium sized onion
3/4 inch root ginger or 1 teaspoon ginger powder
3 cloves garlic
1 teaspoon coriander powder
3/4 teaspoon chilli powder
1 teaspoon garam masala powder
dash of red colour
1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
4 tablespoons yoghurt
juice of one lime
1 tablespoon oil
1/4 bunch coriander leaves, one onion and lime juice for garnishing.

METHOD

Skin chicken and quarter. Prick flesh with a fork and sprinkle with salt. Grate onion, ginger and garlic finely. Mix well with yoghurt and lime juice. Add powdered spices and make a thick paste. Make gashes on the chicken, rub well with the paste. Leave to marinate for 4 to 5 hours. Place on a greased baking tin and cook for half an hour in a moderate oven (350 degrees Fahrenheit). Brush with oil and cook for another half an hour. Sprinkle with lime juice and garnish with chopped coriander and onion rings.

EAST INDIA

With their partiality for fish, prawns and shrimp, Bengalis frequently combine one of these with vegetables. One such dish is Lau Chingri, shrimp with vegetable marrow.

Lau Chingri

INGREDIENTS

2½ cups of vegetable marrow, peeled, deseeded, and finely diced.
1 cup peeled shrimps, fried in oil for five minutes
2 tablespoons of coriander powder
1 tablespoon of cumin powder
1/4 teaspoon of turmeric powder
1/4 teaspoon of chilli powder
Green chillies to taste, slit and de-seeded
Salt and sugar to taste
2 tablespoon oil
4 bay leaves
Garam masala (two green cardamoms, 2 cloves, 2 inch piece cinnamon, all whole)

METHOD

Heat oil till it smokes in a deep frying pan or karai. Add the marrow and mix with the oil. Stir in 1 teaspoon salt, cover tightly and simmer for five minutes.

Remove cover. Do not be alarmed if the marrow has released quite a lot of liquid. Add spice paste, mix thoroughly, turn up the flame to high heat and continue cooking for another five minutes, stirring all the time. Almost all the liquid should be absorbed by now and the marrow cooked. If, however, it is dry but still not cooked, cover the pan again and simmer over low heat till it is done. Do NOT add water as this will spoil the flavour.

When the marrow is nearly dry and cooked, add the fried shrimp and the chillies. Adjust salt and add a little sugar to taste. Mix well and cook, stirring all the time till all the water is

absorbed.

In a separate pan, heat a teaspoon of ghee (butter or oil can be substituted), add bay leaves and garam masala. Fry till the spluttering stops, and pour the whole, ghee, chillies and garam masala, over the lau chingri.

Bhapa Doi

Though virtually all sweets are bought in Bengal, a few are made at home. One very delicious and easy one which has a sweet and sour caramel flavour is *Bhapa Doi* made with yoghurt.

INGREDIENTS

1 tin condensed milk (traditionally milk is cooked down till thick)
1 cup sweetened yoghurt
Nuts and raisins to decorate

METHOD

Heat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Whip condensed milk and yoghurt together till smooth and fluffy, but remember that overbeating will cause the yoghurt to separate and release water.

Pour the mixture into an oven-proof dish and decorate it with chopped nuts and raisins. Place the dish on a baking tray and pour hot water around it till it is halfway up the dish. Bake for half an hour till a skewer inserted into it comes out clean. The colour should be brownish pink and the texture firm and smooth.

WESTERN INDIA

A great favourite in Western India and claimed by both Parsis and Maharashtrians is Chutneyed Fish, wrapped in banana leaves and fried. The same dish can be baked in foil with almost the same result, and this is the recipe we give you below.

Chutneyed Fish

INGREDIENTS

1 lb fish fillets
Foil cut into suitable squares so that each fillet can be individually wrapped.
4 ozs. green chutney (recipe given below)

Butter

GREEN CHUTNEY

3 bunches coriander leaves
4 bunches mint
1 teaspoon cumin seed
1 small onion
Green chillies to taste
3 cloves garlic
salt and sugar to taste
Grind or blend all the ingredients together till smooth. Add the juice of one lime and mix well.

METHOD

Spread chutney over the fillets of fish. Place each fillet on suitable sized piece of foil. Dot with butter, and wrap foil around, tying parcel up with sewing thread. Place on a baking tray and cook till done. To serve, remove thread but not foil. This can be unwrapped by each person at table.

Dhokla

INGREDIENTS

1 cup *channa-ka-dal* or gram or split and skinned chick peas
1 cup yoghurt
1/2 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
1 clove garlic (optional)
1/2 teaspoon minced root ginger
pinch of turmeric powder
salt to taste

1 teaspoon mustard seed
1/4 bunch coriander leaves
1 tablespoon grated or dessicated coconut

METHOD

Soak the dal overnight, in a little water. Grind or blend in mixer with ginger, salt, turmeric and garlic.

Add yoghurt and bicarbonate of



Above: Red chillies add colour and flavour to several Indian dishes.

soda and mix well. Allow to stand for a few hours until the mixture becomes frothy.

Spread the mixture evenly on a perforated pan which has been covered with a wet cheesecloth. Steam for about half an hour until firm. Allow to cool slightly and turn on to a platter and peel off the cheesecloth. Cut into diamonds. Now fry the mustard seed in a little oil till it splutters. Dribble the seed over the dhoklas. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and coconut.

SOUTH INDIA

Cabbage Kari

Coconut, either grated or ground, is frequently used in South Indian dishes. Very often it is used almost as a garnish, as is seen in this simple vegetable preparation.

INGREDIENTS

1 small cabbage, finely shredded
1/2 coconut, grated. (Fresh coconut is usually used, but could be substituted by dessicated coconut, if necessary)
Whole green chillies, slit and deseeded, to taste

1 teaspoon husked black gram (uradh dal)

2 teaspoons oil

METHOD

Steam the cabbage or lightly boil it with salt so that it remains crisp. Drain. Heat the oil in a pan (in India, the customary utensil for dishes such as these is a *karai* or a round bottomed *wok*) and put in the mustard seeds, dal and chillies.

When the mustard seeds begin to splutter and the dal turns a light golden brown, add the grated coconut. Stir briefly and add cabbage. Toss well so that the coconut mixture is evenly distributed.

(N.B. Though uradh dal is always used here, and does add to the flavour and texture of the dish, it can be left out if not available, or it can be substituted with gram or split chick peas.)

Lime Rice

Plain boiled rice is usually eaten in South India, but there are several 'fancy' rice preparations for special occasions which are completely different to the North Indian pulaos. Lime rice is one such dish.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup rice

6 green chillies (optional)

1 bunch coriander leaves

pinch of turmeric powder, more for colour than taste.

1 teaspoon *channa-ka-dal* or gram or skinned and cleaned chick peas

2 tablespoon oil

Juice of two limes

1 teaspoon salt

Pinch of asafoetida (optional)

1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds

Curry leaves (leave out if unavailable)

METHOD

The best rice to use for this dish is the long grained variety such as *basmati* or *Patna* rice. Wash and soak the rice, , and then cook it in the normal way, so that the grains of rice are unbroken.

Heat the oil in a deep frying pan or *karai* till it smokes. Add the mustard seed, gram or split chick peas and chillies. Fry till the gram or chick peas turn golden. Add the lime juice, turmeric asafoetida and salt. Bring the mixture to the boil and then pour over the cooled cooked rice. Toss the rice so that it is completely mixed with the lime mixture. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves, and for a special touch, cashewnuts that have been fried separately.



T. S. Sargan



P.N. Abujia

Top: Fresh fruit is available in plenty, and south India is famous for its variety of bananas. Above: Meals in south India are often eaten off a banana leaf. This picture shows an array of southern snacks on a banana leaf.



Rupinder Khullar

Text: CHAMPAKA BASU
Photographs: PRADEEP DAS GUPTA
Design: GOPI GAJWANI
Printing: PRINTWELL, BOMBAY



Produced on behalf of the
Festival of India
by Welcomgroup
the Hotels Division of ITC Ltd.